



 Prestwick House

Free Lesson Plan

WRITING:

Writing a Thesis Statement: Successfully Asserting Your Opinion in an Essay

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.1, 2; TEKS 110.36 (9) A, B(i)

Prestwick House, Inc. ©2022



Objectives:

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- identify effective thesis statements;
- develop an arguable claim for a persuasive, argumentative, or research-based essay;
- understand and respond effectively to a prompt.

Time:

1 class period

Materials:

Handout #1: What Makes a Strong Thesis Statement?

Handout #2: Identifying a Good Argumentative Thesis Statement

Handout #3: Writing and Editing an Effective Thesis Statement



Procedure:

- 1. Set up:** Before starting the lesson, have a prompt that you are ready to assign students. This lesson works well with any persuasive, argumentative, or research-based essay that you want to assign. Prompt ideas are also provided in the Homework/Extension section.
- 2. Introduce thesis statements and their importance:** Give your students Handout #1, “What Makes a Strong Thesis Statement?” and review the information with them.
- 3. Small group (15 minutes):** Divide the class into groups of three or four. Have each group work on Handout #2, “Identifying a Good Argumentative Thesis Statement.” Once students have finished, review their work as a whole class, asking each group to share their work.

Students may have a variety of answers. Explaining the correct choices should clarify any misconceptions they have with creating thesis statements.

Writing a Thesis Statement: Successfully Asserting Your Opinion in an Essay

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.1.2; TEKS 110.36 (9) A, B(i)
Prestwick House, Inc. ©2022



4. Individual work (15 minutes): Have students work individually to develop a thesis statement for the prompt you assign. Instruct them to complete Handout #3, “Writing and Editing an Effective Thesis Statement.”

5. Reflection/Exit ticket (10 minutes): Ask students to edit their thesis statements and hand them in before leaving the classroom.

Homework/Extension:

If your students understood the concept:

Give them one of the following assignments:

- Take home a copy of your revised thesis statement and begin building an outline for the essay. What arguments can be used to support your thesis?
- Take home a copy of your revised thesis statement and begin annotating and recording evidence from reliable sources to support it. Bring a list of cited evidence into class.

If your students struggled with the concept:

- Have them use a few practice prompts to redo Handout #3: “Writing and Editing an Effective Thesis Statement.”
- Come up with your own practice prompts or use the following:
 - Is more technology useful for the classroom? Why or why not?
 - Choose a political or social problem that is important to you and propose a solution.
 - Consider this quote from Theodore Roosevelt: “Far and away the best prize that life offers is the chance to work hard at work worth doing.” Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why or why not?

Extension:

If students finish early, consider adding this activity to the end of the lesson, before the exit ticket:

Small Group (pair-share) (15 minutes): Students should trade thesis statements with a partner and ask them to revise it. Ask students to discuss the following critiques with their partner:

- Does this statement respond to the prompt?
- Does this statement address “why” the writer has made this claim and is it arguable?
- Does this statement use active verbs and specific language? Circle any weak verbs or basic vocabulary that your partner could revise.

Because this lesson requires students to write complex sentences, consider pairing it with a review on misplaced and dangling modifiers to make sure students’ phrasing is clear and grammatically correct.

WRITING:

Writing a Thesis Statement:
Successfully Asserting Your Opinion
in an Essay

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.1, 2; TEKS 110.36 (9) A, B(i)
Prestwick House, Inc. ©2022



Standards:

Common Core Standards

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.1

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.2

Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills

TEKS 110.36 (9) A, B(i)

References:

Grudzina, Douglas, and McMahon, Bill. 2013.

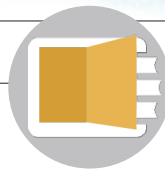
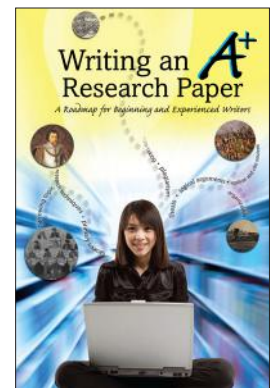
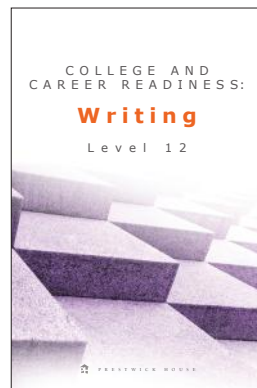
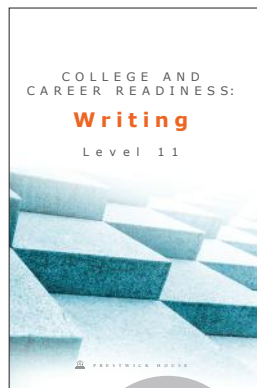
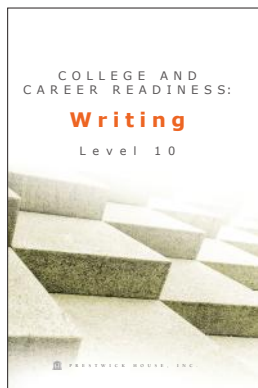
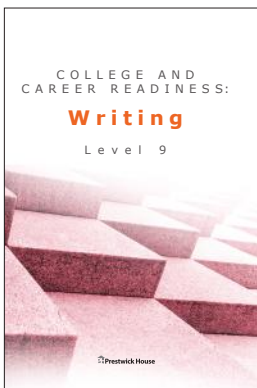
College and Career Readiness: Writing Series.

Clayton, DE: Prestwick House.

Grudzina, Douglas, and Kolba, Boris. 2008.

Writing an A+ Research Paper.

Clayton, DE: Prestwick House.



English Teacher's Free Library

www.prestwickhouse.com/free-library

Looking for more free resources?

The English Teacher's Free Library is always updated with new, free resources to help in your classroom, including:

Posters | Crossword Puzzles | Lesson Plans | Ebooks | How to Teach Guides | Other Resources



P.O. Box 658 • Clayton, Delaware 19938 • Tel: 1.800.932.4593 • Fax: 1.888.718.9333 • Web: www.PrestwickHouse.com

Writing a Thesis Statement: Successfully Asserting Your Opinion in an Essay

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.1.2; TEKS 110.36 (9) A, B(i)
Prestwick House, Inc. ©2022



Handout 1

What Makes a Strong Thesis Statement?

The best foundation for a well-organized essay is a strong, clear thesis statement.

A *thesis statement* is a sentence at the beginning of your essay or paragraph that summarizes the claim you are making. But what makes a good thesis statement? Here are three ways to determine if the statement is strong:

Answer what the prompt asks and make it arguable: Carefully read the prompt you have been given. Does it ask you to make an argument for something or to make a counterclaim? Does it ask you why you feel the way you do, or does it ask you how to create change? Ensure that your claim firmly responds to your prompt.

Make sure your claim addresses “why”: Do not just state whether you agree or disagree. Explain why you support your position with specific examples, facts, or reasons. Think of your thesis statement as a preview of what the rest of your essay will cover.

In addition, make sure that your statement is a debatable stance that you can support with evidence. It should not simply be a factual statement.

Today, we'll be looking at examples of good thesis statements, fixing some poor ones, and then writing and editing your own.

Writing a Thesis Statement: Successfully Asserting Your Opinion in an Essay

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.1.2; TEKS 110.36 (9) A, B(i)
Prestwick House, Inc. ©2022



Handout 2

Identifying a Good Argumentative Thesis Statement

Addressing the Prompt

Directions: For each question, read the prompt and then select the thesis statement that best addresses it. Explain why you made that choice.

Example:

Prompt: Should college football players be paid for their time at a college? Why do you think so?

A. I agree that college football players should be paid.

B. College football players should be paid because they dedicate the same time, risk level, and financial contribution to their organization as professional football players do.

Why? I think (B) is the stronger thesis statement because it clearly explains three reasons college athletes should be paid, while (A) only states the opinion.

1. Prompt: Is a hot dog a sandwich? Why or why not?

A. A hot dog is a sandwich because it shares similarities with a deli sandwich and provides the same satisfaction.

B. A hot dog is not a sandwich, and it is also not a taco.

Why? (A) answers the prompt better than (B) does because it provides specific reasoning for why a hot dog is a sandwich. In addition, (B) strays from the prompt.

2. Prompt: Choose a social issue and propose a solution for how to fix it.

A. The criminal justice system should change because some criminals should be given a second chance to be better citizens and live a normal life.

B. The criminal justice system needs to focus on rehabilitating criminals and increasing the accuracy of crime-catching technology.

Why? (B) provides a stronger answer by supplying solutions to the problem as the prompt asks.

Writing a Thesis Statement:
Successfully Asserting Your Opinion
in an Essay

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.1.2; TEKS 110.36 (9) A, B(i)
Prestwick House, Inc. ©2022



- 3. Prompt:** Is there a problem with fake news on social media? Why or why not?
- A. Fake news can sometimes be a problem on social media, but sometimes it is accurate.
 - B. Fake news is becoming a problem on social media, spreading misinformation, and creating fear and suspicion among loved ones.

Why? (B) provides a stronger answer, as it gives arguable reasons for why fake news is a problem. In addition, (A) is not actually taking a stance but is rather arguing both sides.

- 4. Prompt:** Choose an environmental problem and propose a solution.
- A. As landfills pile high with non-degradable waste, Americans should focus on reducing their consumption, using glass instead of plastic, and recycling paper and appropriate plastic materials.
 - B. American citizens should be concerned about their garbage output because landfills run out of space, and the overflow damages the oceans.

Why? This one is tricky! (A) is the correct answer because the question asks the student to provide clear solutions to the problem. (B) would be a good thesis statement for a question asking only why landfills are a problem, but (A) takes it a step further and proposes clear solutions that the essay can focus on.

Not “What,” but “Why” or “How”

Directions: For each pair of thesis statements, choose the stronger one and explain why you chose it.

Example:

- A. College football players should be paid because they deserve it and work hard for their team.
- B. College football players should be paid because they dedicate the same time, risk level, and financial contribution to their organization as professional football players do.**

Why? I think (B) is the stronger thesis statement because it clearly explains three reasons college athletes should be paid, while (A) only states an opinion. Furthermore, the reasoning for (A) is not arguable; it's a personal opinion.

Writing a Thesis Statement:
Successfully Asserting Your Opinion
in an Essay

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.1, 2; TEKS 110.36 (9) A, B(i)
Prestwick House, Inc. ©2022



1. A. Junk food is bad for your health, and school officials need to stop students from eating it.
B. Junk food negatively affects health and should be regulated in school lunchrooms and replaced with healthier alternatives.

Why? Both statements focus on health as the reason to eliminate junk food, but (B) provides clear, specific solutions for the essay to focus on.

2. A. Kids should be allowed to own phones because it teaches them responsibility, gives them independence, and helps them be safer.
B. Kids should be allowed to own phones as long as they are capable of handling the consequences of misusing them.

Why? (A) is more specific, has arguable reasons, and is more assertive in its statement. (B) is non-specific in what the consequences could be or how they should be handled.

3. A. A vegan diet should be considered because it is healthy for people and good for animals.
B. People should switch to a vegan diet because it lowers the risk of heart disease, reduces animal cruelty, and increases energy levels.

Why? While both statements assert the same reasoning, (B) is more specific, has arguable reasons, and is more assertive in its statement.

4. A. Animals should not be kept in zoos because they should be allowed to be wild instead.
B. Animals should not be kept in zoos because it can be damaging to their physical and mental health.

Why? While both examples are fairly simple, (B) creates arguable reasons rather than just a personal opinion.

Writing a Thesis Statement:
Successfully Asserting Your Opinion
in an Essay

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.1, 2; TEKS 110.36 (9) A, B(i)
Prestwick House, Inc. ©2022



Handout 3

Writing and Editing an Effective Thesis Statement

Addressing the Prompt

Directions: Use this handout to brainstorm, write, and edit your thesis statement. Hand in your finished thesis statement to your teacher as an exit ticket.

1. Rewrite your teacher's essay prompt here:.

2. Circle the key words that tell you what the prompt is asking.

3. Circle whether you agree or disagree with the prompt, and explain why.

Agree Disagree

Explanation: _____

Not "What," but "Why"

1. Now that you have a claim, consider the three most important reasons you've taken this stance.

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

Writing a Thesis Statement:
Successfully Asserting Your Opinion
in an Essay

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.1.2; TEKS 110.36 (9) A, B(i)
Prestwick House, Inc. ©2022



You now have your claim and the rest of your reasoning outlined.

2. Here is the challenge—Write your claim and how you will support it below...and try to fit it all in one sentence. This is your first attempt at a thesis statement. Use the good examples in Handout #1 as a reference.
